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Morris Community Meals continue this spring

Summary: The collaborative program of the Office of Community Engagement and community partners provides an opportunity for all members of the Stevens County community to enjoy a free-of-charge hot meal together.

(February 9, 2010)-Morris Community Meal, a collaborative program of the University of Minnesota, Morris Office of Community Engagement and community partners, continues this spring. Each month, all members of the Stevens County community are invited to enjoy a free-of-charge hot meal together.

During spring 2010, meals will be served from 5:30 until 7 p.m. on the last Monday of every month—February 22, March 29, April 26—at the Morris Senior Community Center located at 603 Oregon Avenue in Morris.

Since its inception in January 2009, the Community Meal program has established a reputation for delicious menus and a warm, welcoming atmosphere. The project is a valued event in the community, providing free meals to hundreds of Stevens County residents and opening community space to build bridges and strengthen relationships.

Sam Esguerra, Community Engagement student representative, sums up the goal of Community Meal. “Community Meal is an excellent example of the value of community-based collective action and the incredible power that each of us has to improve and enrich our communities and the lives of those around us,” he says. “The project demonstrates our ability to...empower ourselves to meet the needs of our neighbors.”

The Community Meal program is supported by a broad coalition of local businesses and organizations. This spring, they include: Pomme de Terre Food Co-op, Willie’s Supervalu, Stevens FORWARD!, Bremer Bank, Bello Cucina, Hoffman Realty, Mobiz Computers, John’s Total Entertainment, Stevens County Food Shelf, Morris Senior Community Center, and the Office of Community Engagement.

Carol McCannon, community member and project co-organizer, notes the importance of community involvement: “Community Meal has been organized on the principle of increasing access to healthy food. Therefore, the success of the project depends upon all people knowing that they may come to eat without anything being expected of them. However, we do want to encourage people to become more involved in Community Meal if they wish.”

Organizers are looking for businesses and community organizations interested in serving as meal sponsors next year, as well as volunteer cooks. Interested community members may come to the Morris Senior Community Center between 1 and 5 p.m. on the day of the meal to help prepare the meal. To get involved as a sponsor or volunteer, contact the Office of Community Engagement at 320-589-6276 or e-mail manolis@morris.umn.edu.

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